

# PEOPLE OF FAITH MAKE THE BEST CITIZENS

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Citizenship is central to a free society. Without men and women acting responsibly, and giving of themselves to others, freedom is jeopardized for everyone. The attributes that make for good citizenship include such virtues as self-discipline, self-responsibility, community service and patriotism.

These virtues do not come naturally to us—they must be carefully nourished. Those who do the nurturing include parents, teachers, the clergy and community leaders. Some do a better job than others, and that varies on several measures, one of which is religion.

Do people of faith make for better citizens than their secular counterparts? From the data we have collected, it appears to be so.

We examined the data collected by the Pew Research Center on the percentage of adults who identify as highly religious. Using the data, we compared the twelve most religious states to the twelve least religious, or most secular, states on several variables.

The twelve most religious states are: Alabama (77 percent of adults identify as highly religious), Mississippi (77 percent), Tennessee (73 percent), Louisiana (71 percent), Arkansas (70 percent), South Carolina (70 percent), West Virginia (69 percent), Georgia (66 percent), Oklahoma (66 percent), North Carolina (64 percent), Texas (64 percent), and Utah (64 percent).

The twelve least religious states are: New Hampshire (33 percent of adults identify as highly religious), Massachusetts

(33 percent), Vermont (34 percent), Maine (34 percent), Connecticut (43 percent), Wisconsin (45 percent), Washington (45 percent), Alaska (45 percent), New York (46 percent), Hawaii (47 percent), Colorado (47 percent), and Oregon (48 percent).

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Here's how they match up on eleven different issues,

### **Religious Liberty Laws**

Ten of the most religious states have a religious-liberty law.

One of the least religious states has a religious-liberty law.

### **Abortion**

#### *Abortion Rate:*

The average percentage of pregnancies aborted per 100,000 in the most religious states was 4.19 percent. This comparatively low figure was driven by restrictive abortion laws in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Texas. All of these states had zero abortions last year. Georgia saw a small decline while Utah, South Carolina and North Carolina posted an increase.

The average percentage of pregnancies aborted per 100,000 in the most secular least religious states was 14.44 percent.

#### *Restrictive Abortion Laws:*

All twelve of the most religious states have restrictive abortion laws.

One of the least religious states has a restrictive abortion law.

#### *Total Number of Abortions:*

Lots of changes have taken place since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned and the issue of abortion was returned to the states. For example, the states have implemented different policies, resulting in dramatic differences.

Last year, 92,810 abortions were performed in the most religious states.

The figure for the least religious states was 236,110.

#### *Number of Abortion Facilities:*

There are a total of 33 abortion facilities in the most religious states (eight have none).

There are a total of 264 abortion facilities in the least religious states.

### **Transgenderism**

#### *Laws against Minors Receiving Gender Affirming Care:*

All twelve of the most religious states have laws against minors receiving gender affirming care.

One of the least religious states has a law against minors receiving gender affirming care.

#### *Laws Protecting Women's Sports:*

Eleven of the most religious states have regulations protecting women's sports.

Two of the least religious states have regulations protecting women's sports.

#### *Laws Protecting Women's Bathrooms and Locker Rooms:*

Eight of the most religious states have some form of protection.

None of the least religious states have any protections for

women's facilities.

## **Parental Rights**

Eight of the most religious states have laws protecting parental rights.

None of the least religious states have laws protecting parental rights.

## **Education**

### *School Choice:*

Eleven of the most religious states have some sort of school choice program.

Three of the least religious states have some sort of school choice program.

### *Sexually Explicit Material:*

Nine of the most religious states have regulations barring sexually explicit materials in schools.

None of the least religious states have regulations barring sexually explicit materials in schools.

## **Internet Porn**

Eleven of the most religious states require age verification to view porn over the Internet.

None of the least religious states require age verification to view porn over the Internet.

### *Prostitution:*

All of the most religious states ban prostitution.

All of the least secular states ban prostitution, but Maine and New York in recent years have watered down some of the

provisions against prostitution. In Maine, it is decriminalized to sell sex, but it is still illegal to buy sex. In New York, the law banning loitering for the purpose of prostitution has been repealed. Additionally, California also repealed its law banning loitering for the purpose of prostitution, but it is not one of the most secular states.

## **Self-Destruction**

### *Drug Overdose Rate:*

There is little difference between the most religious and the least religious states on this variable.

### *Suicide Mortality Rate:*

There is little difference between the most religious and the least religious states on this variable.

### *Medical Assisted Suicide:*

All twelve of the most religious states ban medical assisted suicide.

The least religious states are split six to six on this issue.

### *Drug Legalization:*

In the most religious states, four have made no effort to legalize drugs; five have legalized medical marijuana; and three have decriminalized marijuana.

In the least religious states, only one has made no effort to legalize drugs; two have decriminalized marijuana; and nine have fully legalized marijuana.

## **Self-Giving**

### *Community Service:*

In the most religious states, citizens contributed a combined

total of 963,500,000 service hours.

In the least religious states, citizens contributed a combined total of 793,000,000 service hours.

*Military Service:*

*Per capita, the rate of enlistments, ages 18-24, were much greater in the religious states than in the least religious states.*

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The findings are profound. People of faith not only value religion personally, they live in states where religious liberty is protected. They value life, beginning in the womb. They accept our God-given nature, and do not approve of schemes to transition to the opposite sex (which is a fiction anyway).

Pornography is rejected, whether it is available online or in elementary and secondary school books. Parents have rights that schools need to respect. They should also have the right to send their child to the school of their choice, without paying twice—once for public education and once for the private option.

People of faith are not selfish. Indeed, they are more likely to be self-giving. This matters greatly to those whom they serve; their voluntary efforts are an example of putting their faith into action. Everyone benefits when young men and women serve in the armed forces, and in this regard religious Americans are a role model for everyone.

It makes sense that secularists are not gung-ho on religious liberty—if religion doesn't matter much in their own lives, why should they care? Their acceptance of abortion and transgenderism smacks of radical individualism. It also explains why they don't demand a crackdown on sexually

explicit material in the schools or online porn. And, of course, it makes sense that those who are pre-occupied with themselves have little interest in giving back to their community or serving in the armed forces.

To be sure, there are many religious persons who are self-absorbed, and there are many secularists who are not. But *overall*, the data indicate that people of faith make for better citizens, and that is an important cultural marker.